



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Goodbye from Phil Reichert	1-2
Hepatitis Test Day	2
New HHS Hepatitis Site	2
STD Month	3
CDC Hep Campaign	3
Hep on the Hill	4
Hep Testing in Charlotte County	4
Yvonne McConnell in Lee County	5
HCV Kills	5

Hepatitis Update is brought to you by the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD and Viral Hepatitis Section.

If you have a news item or photo you would like to submit, email the editor at:

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Hepatitis Update

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2

AUGUST 2016

Goodbye and Farewell

From Phil Reichert

To all the wonderful viral hepatitis program people with whom I have worked with in the past 11 years, each of you who work hard to stem the tide of new cases, I bid a fond farewell. To all the great public health individuals with whom I have had the honor and pleasure to cross paths with in the last 37 years, I will miss you all. With each battle you face, please continue the fight to prevent all communicable diseases and make a positive contribution in your own unique way.



Phil Reichert waving goodbye as he drives off into the sunset.

For those of you who have talked with me over the years, you know I have lots of stories about working in Venereal Disease (now called STD) clinics every day for several years. You get to meet a lot of interesting people doing that type of work. One of the duties I learned I had to do early in my career was teach groups of people who might be at risk for disease about how not to get those diseases. I have since provided information to over a thousand audiences (Yes, I counted. I am someone who counts everything...I'm a counter, but not like the one in your kitchen) about STDs, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and other public health subjects. Some audiences were small, with about five or six participants. Some were over a thousand strong.

Some of my favorite audiences were ones that I talked with at Florida State Hospital (FSH), which is where people go when they have mental health issues, some of which are severe. I was tasked to try and impart some knowledge about prevention techniques. Participants raised their hands and asked pertinent and intelligent questions. I answered, thinking to myself, these people with mental health problems seem pretty normal to me.

It was a challenge to speak to an audience of elementary school kids about diseases individuals get from having sex, without actually talking about sex. It always turned out that fifth-graders were more familiar with the subject than any adult would have thought. They asked very intelligent questions, "If one condom provides protection, wouldn't two be better?"

Occasionally, but very rarely, someone in an audience would raise their hand and say they were offended by my frank remarks about STDs and how they are transmitted.

Continued on page 2

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National Hepatitis Testing Day

As part of Hepatitis Awareness Month, May 19 was National Hepatitis Testing Day. Several county health departments (CHDs) throughout Florida used this opportunity to remind the public who should be tested for viral hepatitis. Here are photos from some of the testing and educational events that were held.



Elizabeth Kim and Kyle Olle with DOH-Pinellas County



DOH-Orange County, left to right: Saadia Stephen and Timothy Norton along with Britney, a student from University of Florida Hospital



DOH-Lee County staff Catheline Lamour and Marie Brown at the Florida West Central Chapter of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)

New HHS Viral Hepatitis Site

www.hhs.gov/hepatitis

In May, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a new viral hepatitis website that will support their work across federal agencies and with partners across the nation to fight viral hepatitis. This is an important step in their efforts to raise greater awareness about viral hepatitis prevention, testing, care and—in the case of hepatitis C—cure, among policy makers, health care providers, at-risk populations and the public.

The new site features information about hepatitis B and hepatitis C and provides visitors with quick access to online tools that can help assess a person's risk, find hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines and locate hepatitis C services. In addition, the site provides information about the *Viral Hepatitis Action Plan*, which guides the nation's response to viral hepatitis, and provides links to relevant federal policies and guidelines.

You can visit the site at: www.hhs.gov/hepatitis. Along with the new viral hepatitis website, HHS is debuting a new Twitter account: @HHS_ViralHep. This new handle will extend their efforts to share federal hepatitis resources and the *Viral Hepatitis Action Plan*, and engage with community members.

Goodbye and Farewell from Phil Reichert *Continued from page 1*

It's very difficult to talk about gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV without mentioning specific body parts and their various functions. At the other end of the spectrum, there was once a nun in an audience who had no problem hearing about what many see as typical human behavior. She asked poignant questions about specific ways to prevent STDs.

I wish everyone good luck, happiness and lots of interesting people with which to interact during your public health careers. You have all been incredibly interesting to me.

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STD Awareness Month in Miami-Dade

By Micaelle Titus

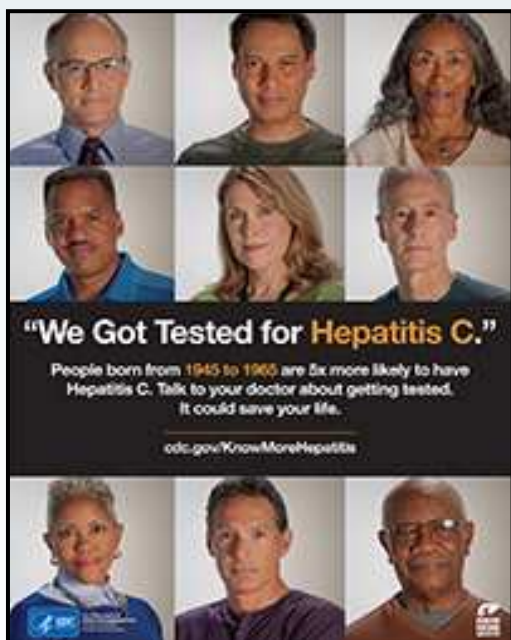
On Friday, April 1, 2016, the STD Awareness Month Kickoff at the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County was a huge success. Our program came together as a team to bring great spirit and energy in spreading the word about STD prevention and awareness. Our message for the day was: Protect your sexual health during STD Awareness Month, and all year long, with three simple actions—Talk. Test. Treat.

We educated over 100 individuals visiting the Health District Center, gave out 75 Talk. Test. Treat prevention bags, awarded a STD awareness gift basket and distributed almost 1,000 condoms in four hours! The clients were extremely grateful for both the information and the items we gave them.



From left to right: Micaelle Titus (seated), Claudia Jones, Anita Harris, Daby Sully, Claudine Pike, Cheryl Hardy, Iva Arbolaiez, Francisco Caraballo, Marielys Pino, Dennys Castellano, Alicia Betancourth, Carmen Hernandez and Yuri Velasquez.

Know More Hepatitis Campaign



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Viral Hepatitis recently released the next phase of the national *Know More Hepatitis* campaign, which encourages hepatitis C testing among people born from 1945–1965. The campaign is implemented at the national level using a variety of multi-media channels. New resources include two video public service announcements (PSAs) and four posters. Additional materials are also available to support local educational efforts, including more video and radio PSAs, posters, a fact sheet, infographics, and buttons and badges to post on websites.

Thank you for your continued dedication to viral hepatitis prevention and control. We hope you find the *Know More Hepatitis* campaign materials helpful in your efforts. If you have any questions or suggestions for the *Know More Hepatitis* campaign, email us at dvhw@cdc.gov. We look forward to working with you!

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Hepatitis on the Hill

By Pam Langford

On March 6–8, 2016, Miriam Altieri from Tallahassee, Diannee Carden Glenn from Weston and I participated in **Hepatitis on the Hill** in Washington, D.C. It was sponsored by the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, National Alliance of State and Territorial Aids Directors (NASTAD), Hep B United and the Hepatitis Appropriations Partnership.

Hepatitis on the Hill is a constituent-based advocacy event focused on hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) federal policy issues. We were given the opportunity to visit our senators and House representative to educate their staff on our experiences of living with HBV or HCV. We also provided information and statistics on viral hepatitis in the state of Florida.

This was an exciting time for those of us working to prevent, treat and cure viral hepatitis. With effective and safe HBV vaccines and new HCV treatments with impressive cure rates, we can eliminate both of these viruses in the United States!



Left to right: Pam Langford, U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy from Louisiana, Miriam Altieri, Chris Taylor with NASTAD and Diannee Carden Glenn



Advocates on the east steps of the Capitol Building

Editor's Note: Pam Langford is president of the non-profit organization Hepatitis Education Awareness and Liver Support, better known as **H.E.A.L.S of the South**. Dianne Carden Glenn is on the H.E.A.L.S Board and is also a harm-reduction advocate. Miriam Altieri received a liver transplant in 2009.

They can be reached at:
www.facebook.com/healsofthesouth.

Improving Screening and Testing One Patient at a Time

By Melia Haile

The Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County offers free screening, counseling and testing for hepatitis B and hepatitis C every week in addition to several outreach events each month. Every Monday afternoon, we open our in-house outreach testing clinic to the public and provide screening, counseling, education and testing to anyone in the community. These same services are offered every other Thursday when our staff goes to the local jail and rehabilitation center.



Rosa Stegall prepares to draw blood.

From former injection-drug users to those born 1945–1965, Charlotte County has a large population of residents at high risk for viral hepatitis. Many of our clients know very little about hepatitis and many more have never been tested.

Testing high-risk populations is only one component of our activities. We also reach out to community events, fairs and festivals and provide education on viral hepatitis, answer questions and encourage community members to know their status.



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Spotlight on Yvonne McConnell in Lee County

By April Crowley

Yvonne McConnell, the Hepatitis Coordinator for the Florida Department of Health in Lee County, has been a public health nurse for 23 years. Originally from Maryland, she moved to Florida in 2013 to be the Assistant Community Health Nursing Director. In 2015, she was promoted to Executive Community Health Nursing Director.

Yvonne is responsible for Family Planning, HIV/STD, TB and Refugee Health Programs, Dental, School Health, Immunizations, and Nurse Family Partnership. Their Hepatitis Program is a collaborative effort between the Immunization and HIV/STD Programs.

Yvonne has always found infectious diseases fascinating and has made it her goal to help the Hepatitis Program grow to meet the needs of their community. In her spare time, she is working on her Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) specializing in patient care administration at Sacred Heart University.



Yvonne McConnell with her horse, Glory

Growing up, she was the only female in the family, having four brothers and several male cousins. Today, she is still outnumbered by males. She is the wife of a retired Marine, mom of three grown sons and grandmother to four grandsons. She enjoys horseback riding, gardening and spending time with her four dogs, three cats, one parrot, two horses and a bunch of chickens. In her words, "At least three dogs, one cat and one horse are females!"

Hepatitis C Kills More Americans Than Any Other Infectious Disease

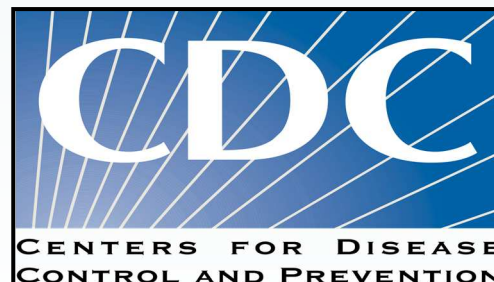
www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom

Deaths associated with hepatitis C in the U.S. reached an all-time high of 19,659 in 2014, according to preliminary surveillance data released May 3, 2016, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A second CDC study, published online in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, shows that annual hepatitis C-related mortality in 2013 surpassed the total combined number of deaths from 60 other infectious diseases reported to CDC, including HIV, pneumococcal disease and tuberculosis. Further, both studies use data from death certificates which often underreport hepatitis C, so there likely were even more hepatitis C-related deaths than these numbers suggest.

The greatest hepatitis C burden falls on baby boomers—those born from 1945 to 1965—many of whom have unknowingly been living with the infection for many years. According to a study published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* earlier this year, many baby boomers were infected via medical procedures in the years after World War II when injection and blood transfusion technologies were not as safe as they are today. Without diagnosis and treatment, they increasingly suffer from liver cancer and other life-threatening hepatitis C-related diseases, and they may unknowingly transmit the disease to others.

"Why are so many Americans dying of this preventable, curable disease?" asked Jonathan Mermin, M.D., director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention. "Once hepatitis C testing and treatment are as routine as they are for high cholesterol and colon cancer, we will see people living the long, healthy lives they deserve."



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